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ABSTRACT

A study investigated how masters programs in communication departments which are members of the Central States Communication Association compare to other schools and masters programs. Questionnaires were answered by 28 Speech Communication departmental members of the 1988 Central States Communication Association. Findings included the following: (1) there were an average of 41.31 masters students per institution; (2) 77.75% of the graduate students were in-state residents; (3) 8.27 students were transfers; (4) 1.08 students transferred to another institution to complete their MA or MS; (5) 51.73% of the graduate students came from the same institution's undergraduate program; (6) half of the programs require the G.R.E. (graduate record examination) or another entrance exam; (7) most graduate students were full-time; (8) most programs offered courses in interpersonal communication, organizational communication, rhetorical/communication, speech communication education, and public address theory; (9) the average graduate with a thesis requires 45.57 quarter hours to graduate; (10) most schools do not require a thesis; (11) no programs required a foreign language; (12) most graduates do not later enter a Ph.D. program in Speech Communication; (13) most graduates find employment in speech communication; and (14) there were an average of 11.27 graduate faculty per institution. (PRA)

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Inclusive Study of Central States Communication Association Masters Program, 1988 A Quantitative Study.

"Without. . . information concerning our academic programs, we have little means of evaluating our field as a whole of effectively showing the results of our scholarly endeavors, or internally assessing departmental worth when compared with other programs within our discipline, or of effectively advising our disciplines future scholars concerning graduate education." [1]

The dissemination of information is fast becoming one of the most important vehicles of communication in all fields of education. Our departments and universities have a unique need to know how they compare to other schools and programs. This study does not rate the masters programs in the Central States region Rather it is an opportunity to disseminate comprehensive information concerning masters programs in the Central States region. Unlike Trott Roach, Barker, and Barker, it is not the goal of this study to establish qualifiers in which each program is rated. The information gained in this study is for our own specific evaluation, dependant upon our position. The information attained will have specific importance to potential masters students, instructors, head of departments, deans and college administrators. The goal of this study is to bring specific, and basic information, often overlooked, to the concerned.

Method

Thirty-six subjects for evaluation were selected as the study group. The group consisted of the thirty-six Speech Communication departmental members of the 1988 Central States Communication Association. Tabulation was based upon the return of the questionnaire. The specific numbers, as they apply to each question, were totaled, averaged and or percentaged based upon the number of returns.

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Return Rate

Of the 36 questionnaires sent 28 were returned, a 77.8% return rate. One of the questionnaires was returned blank because that university did not offer a Masters Degree in Speech Communication. It is realistic to believe that this may have been the same situation for other schools who received a questionnaire and, thus, did not return the form.

Results / Interpretation

Evaluation of the questionnaire results will follow in the same order as the questionnaire. Not all of the results will be analyzed. Some of the results to the questions do not lend for specific analysis and are quite informative within themselves.

Question 1

There were 26 total responses completed on the forms returned. The total number of estimated graduate students is 1,074. When this total number is divided by return number, we find that the average masters program in Speech Communication includes 41 (41.31) students.

Question 2

Question two begins to uncover some of the "hidden" information we wanted to discover. A large number of graduate students stay in state to begin their masters work. Twenty-six replies revealed that 834 total students are residents of the institution's state. Of the 41 students enrolled in the masters program (Question 1) 33 (33.36) or 77.8% are residents of the state of the institution. We infer from this that there is not a large migration of students for a number of possible reasons such as; financial advantages, family, established jobs and the proximity of the institution.

Questions 3, 4

Both of these questions focus on transfers into and out of an institution's Masters programs. This section of the survey proved to be most fascinating and will be elaborated upon in some detail, but first the numbers

Two hundred and fifteen students, total estimate, transferred from one program into the program that the school completing the survey is associated with. When divided by the number of responses, 26, we discover that an average of 8 (8.27) masters students, per institution, are transfer students. Conversely, in question 4, we find that only an average of 1 student per Central State school is transferring to another school (26 replies, total number of 28, 1.08 transfer students per responding institution. This large discretion in numbers prompts the following evaluation.

The totals in question 3 and 4 show that students are transferring into Central States programs but not out of them. Possible reasons may be convenience, tuition, fear of a loss of credit hours, or quality of education. Using the large discretion of numbers in questions three and four, we find that 7 more students are becoming members of a Central States graduate program than students who are transferring to another institution. If we grant that the 1 transferring student (Question 4) stays within the Central States region, that still leaves seven students unaccounted for. The inference is that 7 out of the 41 Masters students, 17.1%, are coming from geographical areas outside of the Central States region. There are many variables possible in considering the reason why. These variables are not included in this questionnaire. But the Masters programs in this region have held a strong academic reputation.

Question 5

The scale of answers to this question was just about as far apart as percentages will allow. Twenty-six answers totaled and divided by the sum reveals that nearly half (51.7%) of the students in a Masters program comes from the same institution's undergraduate program. Because of the huge discretion in averages the 52% final total helps to equate the offset of percentages. For example, the four highest percentages reported were 93%, 85%, and 80% (2) Conversely the four lowest percentages were 2% (2), 5%,

and 6%

No other question had such a divergence of numbers. For this question, the averaging of the percentages may lead to a false representation as it applies per institution. But the final, averaged, percentage of just over one-half lends to some dissimilitude in the wide range of answers

Question 6

Of the 27 replies on this question, almost half, 14, require some type of entrance exam for the students coming into the program. The problem arises in the second part of question six. Of the 14 institutions that require an entrance exam, there were 7 different stipulations or requirements for entrance. These varied answers show a tremendous lack of cohesiveness and expectations for each institution. First only half have the G.R.E. required. Of the 14 that require the G.R.E., 4 use the scores as an information gathering device and there is no minimum score. Of the 14 that use an entrance exam 3 do not use the G.R.E.. Two schools use the Miller Analogy Test and another uses an English Qualifying Exam.

The results of this question show a basic need for Central State Master's programs to become more cohesive. The discrepancy in expectations of incoming graduate students should be more concise. The only commonalty in the institutions that use an entrance exam is just that, that they use an entrance exam

Question 7

Question seven shows the majority of graduate students are enrolled as full time students. Assistantships and scholarships may be the main staple of the student's determination to be full time. Eight institutions listed the majority of their students as part-time. There are many variables here. Most likely, the prevalent variable is money. Professional members of the work force, students working their way through college and time restrictions are some of the variables to consider for these students

Question 8

Question 8 addresses the area of study offered by the schools. The subject areas presented on the questionnaire were formulated through our research and interests. We had hoped that these areas of study would encompass the possible subject codes offered by the institution. It did not. There were 11 write in subject areas, though a space for the write in was not provided. Though we feel the subject areas are complete and specific, there is a real possibility that some subject areas were not revealed because the questionnaire did not allow them the opportunity to do so.

Interpersonal Communication was the most frequently checked subject area. Twenty-two of the 27 completed forms specify Interpersonal Communication (81.5%). Rhetorical Communication, Organizational Communication and Speech Communication Education are offered by the majority of Master's programs.

We surmise that the popularity of Interpersonal and Organizational Communication may be due to the many students in professional fields, outside of speech communication education. The argument can be made that courses in Rhetorical Theory and Speech Education does apply to all fields. With classes and majors in Interpersonal and Organizational Communication more students are able to apply these themes and concepts to professions outside of Speech Communication. For example, a business manager may enroll in an Interpersonal Communication class, rather than Rhetorical Theory, with expectations of using the learned concepts in their professional lives. Thus, the greater demand for areas of study in Organizational Communication and Interpersonal Communication.

Question 9, 10

Another variable surfaced from the answers to this question. Some institutions lower the number of specific hours for graduation if a thesis is completed. For example, a student at a particular institution could graduate

with 30 completed semester hours if the student accomplished a thesis. If that student did not complete the thesis they would have to complete 36 semester hours to graduate.

Of the 20 schools who are on semesters 11 require the student to attain 30 hours and a thesis to graduate. The responses on the semester basis were fairly similar. Semester hours with a thesis ranged from 24-30 hours. Semester hours without a thesis ranged from 32-36.

The schools that use the quarter system were also quite similar. The average graduate, without a thesis would need 49 (49.29) quarter hours to graduate. The average graduate with a thesis would require approximately 46 (45.57) quarter hours attained.

As question 9 demonstrates the number of necessary credit hours for graduation is dependant upon the thesis. Question 10 follows up on this impression when we find that 18 of the 27 schools leave the writing of a thesis as an option to the graduate student. The optional or required plan, therefore, has a direct impact upon the number of credit hours must earn in order to attain a degree.

Before delving into question 12 and 13 we first analyze the answers to these two questions. The answers listed, a few, about half and almost all, lack numerical precision. The answers given were fairly vague because of the questions. It would be difficult, if not impossible, for the requestor to be exact in the answering a specific numeral figure. The unanswerable question still remains, "How many is a few?" We interpret a few to mean more than none and less than half. We then interpret a few to mean a quarter or third of the particular class. We realize this answer is still vague, but nonetheless it is an adequate and comprehensible understanding of the answer as it applies to the question.

Question 12, 13

Question 12 and 13 focus on the graduate of a MA or MS institution

This question helps us to understand the rationale for students completion of their Masters degrees. The information in questions 12 and 13 suggest that the majority of the graduate students do not go on to attain their Ph.D. but use their degree to attain, if they had not already, employment in the field of Speech Communication. This information, when applied to question 8, may support the theory of why Interpersonal and Organization Communication is so popular. Few students with a master's degree further their education and these students use the degree in the professional world.

Question 15

This question, along with question 14, were basic informational questions. When question 15 was totaled and applied a staggering figure emerged. The total number of graduate faculty numbered 293. The institutional high was 20, the low 4. Twenty-six questionnaires had completed graduate faculty lists. Thus, when divided by the number of replies, there is an average of 11 (11.27) graduate faculty per institution. When the average number of faculty is applied to the average number of students per institution the graduate teacher-student ratio is 1:3.67. One instructor per four graduate student. This is an amazing ratio. Before we become dumbfounded by the ratio we need to analyze the situation.

First, we must understand that, in most cases, these faculty members have many other responsibilities. Departmental responsibilities, writing and publishing as well as other professional endeavors, such as consulting, prevent these faculty from designating their time and efforts solely to the Master's program.

Another observation that needs to be made is that these faculty members are not necessarily only instructing Masters classes. The majority of the listed faculty members are generally responsible for undergraduate and, in some cases, Ph.D. instruction. Though the ratio of 1:4 seems quite impressive there are other variables that need to be considered in the

relationship between Master's student and Master's instructor

Results

1. What is the estimated number of students presently enrolled in your graduate program?

26 replies 1,074 total 41:31 average MA, MS students per institution

2. Estimate the number of graduate students who are residents of your state

26 replies 834 total 77.75% of the graduate students are in state residents

33.36 average per institution

3. Estimate the number of graduate students who have transferred into your graduate program.

26 replies 215 total 8.27 students per institution are transfers

4. Estimate the number of graduate students who transfer to another institution to complete their MA or MS.

26 replies 28 total 1.08 per institution

5. Estimate the number of graduate students who come from your undergraduate program.

26 replies 51.73% per institution 2% low 93% high

6 Is the G.R.E. or another entrance exam required?

27 replies 14 require 13 do not

If the G.R.E. is required, what is the minimal score requirement?

4 no minimal 2 - 1,000 2 - G.P.A. dependant on test requirement

2 - Miller Analogy Test 1 - test is not required if bachelorate in Speech

Communication earned 1 - 400 English 1 - 500 English 1 - English

Qualifying Exam

7. What is the status of the majority of your graduate students?

27 replies 8 part-time 15 full time 2 summer

1 equal amount for all three answers 1 equal amount full time and part-time

8 Check the subject areas offered for Graduate study

27 replies

Language Systems	3	Intercultural Communication	7
Interpersonal Communication	22	Public Address	14
Organizational Communication	19	Oral Interpretation	4
Rhetorical Comm./Theory	20	Speech Comm. Education	17

Write Ins: Mass Communication - 6, Theatre - 3,
Debate/Forensics - 1, Public Relations - 1

9. How many hours are required for your MA and MS?

27 replies 31.2 semester hours 45.57 quarter hours with a thesis 49.29 without a thesis

10. is a thesis:

27 replies 9 required 18 optional 0 not offered

11. Does your graduate program require students to have a reading knowledge of a foreign language?

27 replies 0 Yes 27 No

12. Indicate the appropriate number of graduates from your program who later enter a Ph.D. program in Speech Communication.

26 replies 1 none 18 few 7 about half 0 almost all

13. Indicate the number of graduates who find employment in an area of Speech Communication.

26 completed 0 none 0 few 9 almost half 17 almost all

14. Institution Name

15. List on the reverse side the names of your graduate faculty and asterisk the chair.

26 completed 293 total 11.27 average per institution